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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001143

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY LEAKS SPUR DISCUSSION OF
PAKISTAN DIALOGUE

Classified By: CDA Peter Burleigh for reasons 1.4 (B, D).

11. (C) Summary: Despite Pakistan's release of JUD leader Hafiz Saeed on Tuesday and allegations of cease-fire violations yesterday, Indian media is buzzing with suggestions that the Indian Government is taking a second look at its no-dialogue strategy with Pakistan and may be considering restarting talks with Islamabad sooner than expected. Following purposeful leaks of information by the Ministry of External Affairs, a public discussion has ensued about whether GOI should re-engage in a dialogue with Pakistan six months after the Mumbai attacks.

12. (C) Summary Continued: The leaks contradict earlier statements that India would not engage in talks with Pakistan until Islamabad delivers on its promises to follow through with a successful prosecution of the individuals involved in the planning and execution of the Mumbai attacks last November. A second look at India's strategy may be due to perceptions that external pressure, mostly from the U.S., will eventually force a dialogue. Foreign Secretary Menon himself in a June 4 conversation with the Charge would only say definitively that India had decided to go ahead with a donation of wheat to feed displaced persons from the Swat Valley. End Summary.

Background on the Leak

13. (C) Several major Indian dailies on Thursday morning carried headlines and editorials about India's possible new approach toward Pakistan, with most of them referencing "a well-placed source" that provided information about the different options now under consideration at the "highest levels of the government." Quoting President Kennedy, the new Indian External Affairs Minister, S.M. Krishna, reportedly told his officers, "We should not negotiate out of fear but we should never fear to negotiate". The media is also speculating that the first signs of a change in tone toward Islamabad could take place 15-16 June when Prime Minister Singh and President Zardari attend the Shanghai Cooperation Summit in Yekaterinburg (if Singh goes).

A Change in Heart, A Contradiction, or Simply False Information?

14. (C) The sudden flurry of discussion about a possible

re-look at Pakistan policy is a surprise because it does not track with many previous official statements criticizing Pakistan for not fully cooperating with GOI over the last six months since the Mumbai attacks. Last week, newly appointed EAM Krishna reiterated his predecessor's message that Delhi does not intend to resume talks with Islamabad before concrete steps are taken to successfully prosecute the terror groups responsible for the Mumbai attacks. (Comment: The contradiction is not indicative of the validity of the new information the press is reporting, because the GOI sometimes fails to coordinate at the highest levels or officials launch trial balloons. What is odd is the timing: the reports of a possible shift in policy come just days after Islamabad's release of Jamaat-ud-Dawa Chief Hafiz Saeed, a move Krishna strongly condemned, and on the same day that Indian press reported that the Pakistani Army violated the ceasefire in Kashmir for the eighth time in 2009. End Comment.)

Menon on Wheat for Swat

15. (C) In a June 4 conversation with Charge on other subjects (septel), Menon noted the flurry of media speculation about talks with Pakistan. He said that India had decided to go ahead with a donation of wheat in response to a World Food Program appeal for aid for displaced Swat residents. Menon said that donating the wheat through the WFP would make it more palatable for Pakistan to accept. India is likely to make an announcement about the donation in the next day or so.

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New Delhi's Motivations

16. (C) A possible reconsideration, if it in fact is taking place, of GOI's current strategy may be in reaction to what the press has characterized as international demands for India to relax its "unhelpful rigid stand" and anticipated U.S. pressure to resume a dialogue during Secretary Clinton's possible visit to India this summer. In addition, Delhi may be feeling pressure from the media itself, which more and more often points to the government's unsuccessful post-26/11 campaign. (Comment: By promising to not engage in a dialogue until Islamabad delivers something concrete, the government may now feel it set the bar too high and is allowing its foreign policy to be held hostage to the vagaries of the Pakistani judicial system. It is conceivable Delhi would want to expand its options. End Comment.)

17. (C) Comment: A shift in public opinion may place some pressure on the government to reconsider its current strategy and to keep the option for a dialogue open. Such a shift would better position India diplomatically, but the problem then, from Delhi's point of view, would be with whom in Islamabad to negotiate. If and when India decides to change its approach and resume talks with Pakistan, the absence of what the GOI considers a trustworthy and influential interlocutor in Islamabad becomes a dilemma. India sees competing power centers in Islamabad and is hesitant to commit to talks with a civilian government which is viewed here as weak and lacking credibility.
BURLEIGH